

CHAPTER – 3

THE PHENOMENON OF FRACTURED ELECTORAL VERDICTS AND HUNG PARLIAMENTS

Parliamentary system of government and political parties are intrinsically connected to each other so much so that nowhere exists a parliamentary system of government without the political parties. According to Reginald G. Bassett¹, the British system of Government is largely the product of British party life. The existence of parties has been a condition of its development; and the nature of the parties has influenced the nature of that development. The part played by party, indeed, has been vital. It is not only a matter of struggles between parties; it is also the fact of their existence. Without party, the struggle against absolute monarchy could not have been won. Without party, Cabinet government could not have developed. “The emergence, development, and consolidation of the Cabinet system of government proceeded *pari passu* with the rise and development of political parties.” Political parties are necessary corollary of representative government.

“There never was an election without a political party”, writes, Bagehot, “the House of Commons lives in a state of perpetual potential choice: at any moment it can choose a ruler and dismiss a ruler. And therefore party is inherent in it, is bone of its bone, and breath of its breath”.

One result of the gradual but continuous development of the British system of government has been the continuity of the great political parties. In countries

1 Reginald G. Bassett, *Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy*, Second Edn., Frank Cass & Co., London, 1964, p. 32

where there has been a relatively sharp transition to representative institutions, the political parties have naturally presented a much more confusing picture. But in Britain one of the most striking features of the political life has been the emergence and maintenance of two great parties, both of which have had a certain continuity of existence from the Long Parliament down to the present time.²

Classical writers, notably Maurice Duverger³, argue that the first-past-the-post system led to a two-party system. He further argued that it was because the Anglo-American democracies have this electoral system, and not the Continental proportional representation system, that they were governed for the most part by the one or the other of the two major parties.

There is a natural connection between the Cabinet government and what we call the "two-party system". If our system of Government is to work with the maximum degree of smoothness and efficiency, it is desirable that two conditions should be fulfilled. First, the members of the Cabinet should be drawn from the same party. Having a similar general political outlook, and usually accustomed to working together, as a consequence of their party association, they are more likely to cooperate harmoniously and effectively in the Cabinet than persons drawn from more than one party. Secondly, the majority in the popular house should be composed of members of the same party. Otherwise, there is bound to be friction between the Cabinet and the House of Commons, with resulting weakness and instability of the government. The essential point is that, if harmony is to be secured between the executive government and the legislature, the cabinet and the majority in the House of Commons must be of the same complexion; but, if the cabinet is to act with the maximum degree of strength and coherence, it should be a single-party cabinet supported by a single-party majority. When such a cabinet resigns, it is desirable that it should be

² *Ibid*, p. 33

³ See, Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in Modern State*, Wiley, New York, 1966.

succeeded by another cabinet of the same type- a Cabinet composed of members of another party, also supported by majority in the House of Commons composed of members of that same party. That implies two great parties and no more.

With more than two important parties, a position in which no party has a clear majority in the House of Commons is bound to arise, sooner or later, and to recur. Under the multi-party conditions prevalent in most continental parliamentary regimes, it is almost certain that no single party will be able to secure a working majority. Coalition or minority ministries are constructed, often with much difficulty and after considerable delay. These lack as a rule a desirable degree of unity and responsibility. They cannot easily carry out a coherent policy because their work has to be based to some extent upon bargaining instead of natural political compromise. In such circumstances ministries are relatively unstable and repeated political crises are the result.

It is not suggested that a two-party situation is indispensable but only that it provides the most satisfactory conditions for the working of the cabinet system. The two-party system has, however, important advantages over a three-party or a multi-party situation. Governments, normally enjoy greater security of tenure and, therefore better opportunities for effective action. They do not have to function in a state of continuous uncertainty; ministerial crises are relatively few and are seldom of long duration. The change-over from one administration to another is effected with the minimum of disturbance and delay. The opposition party is ready to provide an alternative administration from the standpoint of the electorate; a two-party situation undoubtedly simplifies the issues and clarifies responsibility.

But there are critics of the two-party system who view simplicity of the two-party system as deceptive. According to them it is a highly artificial arrangement and that it distorts the expression of the nation's mind. The main argument employed is that "there are always more than two schools of thought in

the nation”⁴. It is a little difficult to define a “school of thought”, but no doubt, it is true that there are more than two of them. It does not follow however that each school should form the basis of a separate political party; nor does it follow that a party-system not functioning on such a basis distorts a nation’s verdict. There is no readymade “mind” of the “nation”; there are hundreds of thousands of electors with the most diverse views and utmost variety of political interests and intelligence. Some kind of order has to be evolved out of this chaos, and party plays an indispensable part in the process.

There are merits and demerits of two-party situation and multi-party situation and therefore, it would be unwise to draw a sharp distinction between a two-party situation and a multi-party situation. All kinds of political groups are bound to exist, under a two-party system they are combined in a particular way, not eliminated. Under a multi-party system, they function separately, and are faced with the problems of combination and agreement. It is held on the one side that a two-party system conceals the real position, and therefore fails to make clear need for seeking agreement. By making possible nominal majorities it encourages delusive hopes and rash expectations; and it results in violent oscillations of policy. On the other side, it is contended that a multi-party system increases opportunities for obstruction, tends to rigidity, and, in practice, increases the difficulties not only of securing the desirable measure of agreement but also of securing the indispensable measure of agreement among a majority of the community without which parliamentary government cannot function. It confuses and irritates the electorate; while the deceptive impressions of simplicity and clarity which may be engendered by the two-party system can be countered in other ways. On this side, it is held that the circumstances of a two-party situation impose upon the party concerned the requisite caution, breadth

4 Reginald G. Bassett, *Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy*, Second Edn., Frank Cass & Co., London, 1964, p. 36.

and flexibility; and that, in fact, the oscillation of policy are not of a violent character.⁵

There may be divergent views as to the respective merits and demerits of a two-party and a multi-party situation. But it is clear that the problems of representative government are essentially the same under both set of conditions. It is also clear that there is a gradual break down in two-party situations in most of the Westminster model parliamentary democracies across the world. In Britain, the breakdown of the two-party system has been the subject of much debate. Many people regard the breakdown as final. In their opinion the tendency is towards the disintegration of the Great parties and the development of a multi-party or group system. Others regard this only as a temporary phenomenon that will again give way to emergence of two-party situations. Bassett⁶ is of the view that there is a danger in taking a too short a view and it is as yet premature to assume the final disappearance of the two-party system. All the parties are, to a greater or less degree, in the melting-pot; it is well within the bounds of possibility that a two-party position will re-emerge.

Irrespective of the analyses and predictions as to whether two-party situations are heading for a doom or bloom, the fact is that there is a wave of breakdown of two-party situations. The most recent elections in Britain, Canada, and Australia have all produced hung parliaments. Before Australia's 2010 election, its most recent hung parliament occurred in 1940.⁷ In the UK, before the 2010 general election the most recent hung parliament occurred in 1974.⁸ Of the three states UK, Canada and Australia, Canada has experienced hung parliaments most frequently. Of the nine federal elections held between 1957 and 1979, six resulted in hung parliaments. However, from the 1980 election until the 2004

5 *Ibid*, p.38.

6 *Ibid*.

7 Mathew Liddy, *Australia's Hung Parliament Explained*. Australian Broadcasting Company, October 13, 2010.

8 Butler, David, and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1974.

election Canadian federal elections produced majority governments each time. The federal elections of 2004, 2006, and 2008 all produced hung parliaments.⁹

There is a body of literature which analyse the breakdown of two party system. Jennifer Biess¹⁰ in her study tried to identify factors that explain the current wave of emergence of new political parties and the resultant hung parliaments in advanced industrial Westminster model parliamentary democracies. Biess analyzes the role played by the rise of post-materialist values in advanced industrial societies in the occurrence of hung parliaments. According to her, traditionally class has been the primary electoral cleavage. Some scholars argue, however, that in advanced industrial societies the emergence of new social issues has led to a decline in the dominance of class-based voting. Clark and Lipset argue that the importance of class in advanced industrial societies is decreasing because “in recent decades traditional hierarchies have declined and new social differences have emerged”.¹¹ Clark and Lipset claim that class-based voting has declined and is being replaced by post-industrial politics, which they refer to as the “New Political Culture”. The following circumstances define the “New Political Culture”: (a) social and economic issues are clearly distinguished; (b) social issues and consumption issues are more salient as compared to fiscal economic issues; (c) issue politics and more widespread citizen participation are increasing while hierarchical political organizations have declined; and (4) the New Political Culture views are more prevalent in younger, more educated, and more affluent people and societies.¹² Clark and Lipset ground their reasoning in terms of the economy and the family, which relate to the decreased influence of

9 Parliament of Canada, 2009.

10 Jennifer Biess, "What's the Hang Up?: Exploring the Effect of Post-materialism on Hung Parliaments," *Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research*, Vol. 16 (2011).

11 Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Are Social Class Dying?" in Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *The Breakdown of Class Politics*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 2001, p. 39.

12 Terry Nichols Clark, "A Debate Over - Are Social Class Dying?" in Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *The Breakdown of Class Politics*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 2001, p. 278.

hierarchical social structures. It is these hierarchies, they argue, that maintain rigid class structures. They contend that political issues change with increased affluence: with increased affluence, people will take basic security needs for granted and consider other things, including lifestyle and amenity issues. This decreases the power of class and hierarchy.¹³ They also argue that the family has embraced more egalitarian values, which further decreases the importance of hierarchical arrangements in society.¹⁴

Hout, Brooks and Manza dispute Clark and Lipset's claim that class is declining; instead they argue that class is becoming more complex. They concede that dichotomous class models are no longer appropriate, but affirm that this does not mean class is dying. Hout and his colleagues make several specific criticisms of Clark and Lipset's work. First, they point to the persistence of income inequality despite the growth of the middle class to show that class is still relevant in the modern context.¹⁵ From a methodological stance, they argue that the Alford Index used by Clark and Lipset to measure the decline of class-based voting is too crude and underestimates the importance of class in voting.¹⁶

While Clark and Lipset focus on hierarchical societal structures that promote rigid class stratification, Inglehart's theory of post-materialist values focuses on the impact of increased affluence on an individual's value priorities, drawing primarily on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. His argument is two-fold. First, Inglehart posits that when people experience economic scarcity and hardship they will give high priority to economic security and safety needs. However, people in an environment of affluence do not experience the same scarcity, so they will move beyond economic security and safety needs and place

13 Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Are Social Class Dying?" in Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *The Breakdown of Class Politics*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 2001, p. 41.

14 *Ibid*, p. 51.

15 *Ibid*, p. 60.

16 The Alford Index is calculated by subtracting the percentage of middle class voters who vote for the traditionally working class party from the percentage of the working class that vote for the working class party.

more value on higher order aesthetic and intellectual needs, which he refers to as post-materialist values.¹⁷ Second, Inglehart stresses that the conditions in which one grows up are most important, since it is when values form. Because of this he stresses that the impact of post-materialist values should increase over time as more people grow up in affluent circumstances.¹⁸

Inglehart recognizes that materialist values, those based on economic security and safety needs, will still be prevalent in society. This leads him to argue that post-materialists will prefer change-oriented political parties.¹⁹ Traditionally, the "change-oriented" parties are those of the ideological Left. This would lead affluent, middle-class voters to vote for Leftist political parties despite their class-based connection with the parties of the Right. Furthermore, working class voters, who are more likely to experience scarcity and possess materialist values, may choose to vote for the parties of the Right who traditionally espouse those values.²⁰ Because of this, Inglehart contends, "The rise of Postmaterialist issues, therefore, tends to neutralize political polarization based on social class."²¹

Dalton characterizes Inglehart's framework as "the most systematic attempt to describe the value changes that are transforming advanced industrial societies."²² Dalton makes a clear distinction between materialist and post-materialist values. Values that stem from physiological needs, which include both sustenance and safety needs, are deemed materialist; these values include economic stability, economic growth, fighting rising prices, strong defence

17 Ronald Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies", *The American Political Science Review*, 65 (4) (December 1971), pp. 991-1017.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1990, p. 257

21 *Ibid.*, p. 259.

22 Russell J Dalton, *Citizen politics*. Third Edition, Chatham House Publishers, New York, 2002, p. 79.

forces, fighting crime, and maintaining order. After safety and sustenance needs are met, people can attend to their social and self-actualization needs. Post-materialist values stem from these higher order needs and include having a less impersonal society, having more say in your job or community, having more say in government, valuing free speech, believing that ideas count, and valuing green space.²³

Beck presents another critique of the post-materialist values argument. He posits that societies have moved from the first modernity to the second modernity. The first modernity entails "the collective patterns of life, progress and controllability, full employment and exploitation of nature;" however, the developments of the first modernity have been fraught with unintended consequences, which the second modernity must now rectify.²⁴ Thus, the recent concern with issues like environmentalism and nuclear disarmament, which are post-materialist values from Inglehart's perspective, actually is the result of the consequences of development during the first modernity. Thus, for Beck the second modernity is reflexive.²⁵ While Beck presents an interesting alternative thesis to the discussion of value change, he still seems to agree that post-materialist society or second modernity has different values than materialist society of first modernity. Thus, while the exact nature of value change is still being debated, scholars agree that values have changed in advanced industrial societies.

Both Dalton and Inglehart posit the existence of a New Politics dimension that accounts for the emergent post-materialist values. Dalton distinguishes between the "Old Politics" and "New Politics" to differentiate between traditional and post-materialist political alignments.²⁶ Class is the primary factor that

23 *Ibid.*

24 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 2.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Russell J Dalton, *Citizen politics*. Third Edition, Chatham House Publishers, New York, 2002, p. 134..

structures the old political cleavages, with the Old Left representing the working class and labor unions and the Old Right identifying with business interests and the middle class.²⁷ New Politics is the post-materialist political dimension. While Dalton recognizes that Old Politics is still the primary ground for partisan conflict, he argues that New Politics affects party systems in advanced industrial societies, because "it can cut across the established Old Politics cleavage."²⁸ Since new political cleavages do not line up with old political cleavages, the emergence of this second dimension does not further polarize the major parties. Also, non-established parties have been more likely to adopt post-materialist positions than the major parties, which has helped smaller parties be more successful.²⁹ Furthermore, the introduction of the New Politics cleavage has contributed to partisan dealignment, which refers to "the erosion of the social group basis of party support."³⁰ This trend has increased electoral volatility and loosened the hold that the cleavages of Old Politics had on voter choice.

This may also help to explain the importance of anti-party sentiment amongst electorates in the UK, Canada, and Australia. Belanger contends that there is a feeling of "political malaise" in post-industrial nations; people are becoming more critical of political parties, especially after those parties fail to meet the electorate's expectations for policy and service provision. While Belanger does not specifically connect his argument to those made by Dalton, this could be due to Dalton's claim that it is generally minor parties that embrace post-materialist platforms rather than the traditional parties. Similarly, Belanger argues that while this feeling is detrimental to major parties, it can be positive for third parties. Political malaise manifests itself in two forms: negative attitudes toward the major parties, which he calls specific antiparty sentiment and negative attitudes towards parties per se, which he refers to as general antiparty

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

sentiment.³¹ He finds that antipartyism brings people to vote for third parties. This is especially true of people who feel specific antiparty sentiment; however, third parties who utilize antiparty rhetoric and paint themselves as "antiparty parties" benefit from general antiparty sentiment as well.³²

But why are these developments relevant to the recent wave of hung parliaments in majoritarian states? The decline of the old political cleavage of class and the rise of new political post-materialist issues has complicated the way in which people vote. The choice is no longer between two distinct alternatives as proponents of the Westminster model claim. Class is declining in its importance because other issues – post-materialist social issues - are rising in saliency. Thus, voters are no longer simply voting for whichever party most naturally represents them based on their class background.

India has also witnessed emergence of multi-party situation. From the number of 17 National Parties, State Parties and registered unrecognised Political Parties, registered with the Election Commission of India in the year 1951, the number has steadily risen to 1746 in the year 2014. An interesting feature is that while there were 11 national parties in 1951, their number has declined to 6 in the year 2014. On the other hand there were only 4 State Parties in 1951, whose number has risen to 47 in 2014. Further, there were only 2 registered-unrecognised political parties in India in 1951, whose number now stands a a whopping 1693.

Eswaran Sridharan³³ in his analysis of the emergence of a plethora of political parties in India is of the view that there are three key points that explain emergence of this pattern: First, India uses what is colloquially known as a first-past-the-post system, which is technically known as the single-member district

31 Eric Belanger, "Antipartyism and Third-party Vote Choice: A Comparison of Canada, Britain, and Australia", *Comparative Political Studies*, 2004, 37(9): p. 1054-78..

32 *Ibid.*

33 Eswaran Sridharan, "Coalitions and Party Strategies in India's Parliamentary Federation", *The Journal of Federalism*, 33:4, (Fall 2003), Publius.

simple plurality (SMSP) electoral system. Second, the polity is not only parliamentary but also federal. It is the federation that has come to define the basic framework for the party system. Federalism has allowed the creation of state party systems, which in aggregate become the national party system. Third, India has a particular pattern of social heterogeneity in that it is multiethnic in terms of religion, caste, language, and tribe in both the national and the state arenas, with intrastate cleavages of religion, caste and tribe.

According to Sridharan, Duverger's theory³⁴ - that the first-past-the-post system leads to a two-party system and that because the Anglo-American democracies have this electoral system, and not the Continental proportional representation system, that they were governed for the most part by the one or the other of the two major parties - does not *stricto sensu* apply to India because of two primary factors, viz. India's federal polity and India's particular pattern of social heterogeneity which is multiethnic in terms of religion, caste, language, and tribe in both the national and the state arenas, with intrastate cleavages of religion, caste and tribe. India, though adopted the first-past-the post system had till 1989 a predominantly one-party dominant system with no second major party in the horizon. The phase from 1989 onwards have seen not the growth of a second major political party to bring about a situation of two major political parties under the two-party system, but has seen, rather mushrooming of a plethora of political parties. According to Sridharan, federal nature of the Indian polity and strong regional sentiments have facilitated growth of multiple political parties as against Duverger's two-party situation. According to him, it is India's parliamentary federal structure that provides the framework within which strong state parties coexist with national parties. The distribution of power between the Centre and the States provides enough powers to the States for there to be incentives to set up state parties aimed at capturing state governmental power.

34 Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in Modern State*, Wiley, New York, 1966.

By and large, both at the centre and in all the States (except Kerala), from 1952 to 1967, India witnessed one dominant party rule of the Congress, with the non-Congress parties remaining in the opposition. In some states the political picture in the parliamentary form of government was so unbalanced that the opposition parties were pushed almost to the fringe. This was the hangover of the political climate that emerged from the freedom struggle in which the Congress had occupied a pivotal position and had retained its broad political appeal.

There was however a gradual shift from the pattern of one dominant party rule. Though the Congress party retained its pre-dominance at the centre till 1989, its dominance at state level was gradually diluted. The regional state-level political parties, with state-level leaders and addressing the regional and religion, caste and language based issues, emerged to capture powers at the state levels. This has led to emergence of regional parties in the states. The emergence and rise of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh is the result of Telugu regional identity. The further developments in Andhra Pradesh leading to creation of the separate states of Seemandhra and Telangana have led to emergence of two more Andhra Pradesh based regional parties - Telangana Rashtra Samithi and the YSR Congress. The Shiv Sena and The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena in Maharashtra is based on regional Maratha identity. The Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, the Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland Peoples Front of Assam, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam DMK and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamilnadu, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand, the Sikkim Democratic Front in Sikkim, the Gorkha National Liberation Front in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, the Naga People's Front in Nagaland, the Mizoram People's Conference, the Mizo National Front and the Zoram Nationalist Party in Mizoram, United Democratic Party and National Peoples Party in Meghalaya are parties based on regional aspirations and regional identities. Similarly, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal are regional parties with regional aspirations. The Communist party of India Marxist and its left-front partners in West Bengal, Tripura and

Kerala, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Janata Dal (United) in Bihar, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh, Janata Dal (Secular) are the other important regional political parties.

Thus, there is a range of State parties, a development buttressed by the fact that Indian federalism is based on the linguistic principle whereby each territorially concentrated linguistic group has its own linguistically homogenous state, leading to a mosaic of linguistic states. In Sridharan's³⁵ view, in India Duverger's law plays itself out at the constituency and state levels; therefore, it is federalism, combined with Duverger's law, which is generated by polarization in the States. Thus, while there are "bipolarities" in most States with only two leading parties or groups, these differ from State to State, with the result that they add up to a large number of parties nationally leading to the emergence of "multiple-bipolarities". Therefore, although the States have mainly bipolar situation, at the national level the party system is highly fragmented with a large number of significant parties and no single party with a majority.

The emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party in the urban conglomerates is another significant political development in India, which to some extent reflects the "New Political Culture" of Clark and Lipset³⁶. Though India as a whole is not an industrialised country to call for political analysis on the basis of materialism and post-materialism, but the urban pockets of National Capital Territory, which to some extent are urban and commercialised and industrialised, have the characteristics of New Political Culture. The emergence of Aam Aadmi Party can to some extent be attributed to the fact that social and economic issues are clearly distinguished; social issues and consumption issues are more salient as compared to fiscal economic issues; issue politics and more widespread citizen participation are increasing while hierarchical political organizations have

35 Eswaran Sridharan, "Coalitions and Party Strategies in India's Parliamentary Federation", *The Journal of Federalism*, 33:4, (Fall 2003), Publius.

36 Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Are Social Class Dying?" in Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *The Breakdown of Class Politics*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 2001.

declined; and the New Political Culture views are more prevalent in younger, more educated, and more affluent people and societies.³⁷ This, to some extent is also due to what Belanger³⁸ calls the feeling of "political malaise". According to Belanger, in post-industrial nations, people are becoming more critical of political parties, especially after those parties fail to meet the electorate's expectations for policy and service provision. This phenomenon has further been explained by Dalton³⁹, who claims that while the feeling of "political malaise" may be detrimental to major parties, it can be positive for smaller parties as it brings people to vote for third parties.

An exhaustive analysis of factors which had led and which are still leading to mushrooming growth of political parties in India is beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, the facts clearly demonstrate that there has been a sharp rise in the number of political parties in India. This is evident from the fact that, as per Election Commission of India records, as on 10th March 2014, there were 6 National Parties and 47 State Parties. Besides the above National and State Parties, there are 1693 registered-unrecognised Political Parties registered with the Election Commission of India. The names of the National Parties and the State Parties are as follows:⁴⁰

National Parties:

1. Bahujan Samaj Party
2. Bharatiya Janata Party
3. Communist Party of India
4. Communist Party of India (Marxist)
5. Indian National Congress
6. Nationalist Congress Party

37 Terry Nichols Clark, "A Debate Over - Are Social Class Dying?", in Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *The Breakdown of Class Politics*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 2001, p. 278.

38 *Supra*, Note 31.

39 *Supra*, Note 22.

40 As per the data of the Election Commission of India.

State Parties

1. Telangana Rashtra Samithi
2. Telugu Desam
3. All India Trinamool Congress
4. People's Party of Arunachal
5. All India United Democratic Front
6. Asom Gana Parishad
7. Bodoland Peoples Front
8. Janata Dal (United)
9. Lok Jan Shakti Party
10. Rashtriya Janata Dal
11. Maharashtrawadi Gomantak
12. Haryana Janhit Congress
13. Indian National Lok Dal
14. Jammu & Kashmir National Conference
15. Jammu & Kashmir National Panther's Party
16. Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party
17. AJSU Party
18. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
19. Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajantrik)
20. Janata Dal (Secular)
21. Karnataka Jantha Paksha
22. Kerala Congress (M)
23. Indian Union Muslim League
24. Maharashtra Nirman Sena
25. Shiv Sena
26. Manipur State Congress Party
27. Naga People's Front
28. People's Democratic Alliance
29. United Democratic Party

30. Hill State People's Democratic Party
31. National People's Party
32. Mizo National Front
33. Mizoram People's Conference
34. Zoram Nationalist Party
35. Aam Aadmi Party
36. Biju Janata Dal
37. All India Anna Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam
38. Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam
39. All India N.R. Congress
40. Pattali Makkal Katchi
41. Shiromani Akali Dal
42. Sikkim Democratic Front
43. Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam
44. Rashtriya Lok Dal
45. Samajwadi Party
46. All India Forward Block
47. Revolutionary Socialist Party

The rise in the number of political parties in the fray naturally leads to fragmentation of votes. However, due to the first-past-the post electoral system, any person who secures the maximum vote, irrespective of whether or not he got a majority of votes cast, is declared elected. This has been a boon in the disguise inasmuch as an analysis of votes secured by political parties in the Parliamentary elections through the years would show that the Congress Party, though secured much less than 50% of the votes cast, but managed to secure a majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha.

**VOTES AND SEATS SECURED BY THE CONGRESS PARTY OVER
SUCCESSION GENERAL ELECTIONS**

YEAR	PERCENT OF VOTES CAST	SEATS	TOTAL SEATS	PERCENT OF SEATS
1952	45.0 %	364	489	74.4 %
1957	47.8 %	371	494	75.1 %
1962	44.7 %	361	494	73.0 %
1967	40.8 %	283	520	54.4 %
1971	43.7 %	362	518	69.9 %
1977	34.5 %	154	542	28.4 %
1980	42.7 %	353	542	65.1 %
1984	48.1 %	415	543	76.4 %
1989	39.5 %	197	543	36.3 %
1991	36.4 %	244	543	44.9 %
1996	28.8 %	140	543	25.8 %
1998	25.8 %	141	543	25.8 %
1999	28.3 %	114	543	21.0 %
2004	26.5 %	145	543	26.7 %
2009	28.6 %	206	543	37.9 %

The first-past-the-post system, in spite of splintering of more than 50% of votes to other political parties, right from the first general elections helped in giving the Congress Party a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha. However, the first-past-the-post system could give 50% or more of the seats to Congress Party as long as Congress Party could secure at least 40.8% of the votes cast. But after the general elections of 1984, when the Congress Party slipped to below 40.8% of the vote share, and other political parties started sharing the remaining votes, we have witnessed fractured electoral mandates resulting in hung Parliaments with no single political party having the working majority to form the ministry.

The same phenomenon has been repeated over and over again in the States as well, where due to multiplicity of political parties in the election fray, the votes are divided and none of the political parties emerge as a majority party to be able to form the ministry.

The Supreme Court in *S.R. Bommai*⁴¹ has observed that frequent elections would belie the people's belief and faith in the parliamentary government, apart from the enormous election expenditure to the State and the candidates. It also generates disbelief in the efficacy of the democratic process which is a death-knell for the parliamentary system itself.

41 *S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India*, (1994) 3 SCC 1.